



**You have downloaded a document from  
RE-BUS  
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice**

**Title:** Prescriptum: Women on the Road

**Author:** Nina Augustynowicz, Maria Czempka-Wewióra

**Citation style:** Augustynowicz Nina, Czempka-Wewióra Maria. (2021).  
Prescriptum: Women on the Road. "Postscriptum Polonistyczne" (2021), nr 1,  
s. 13-28. DOI: 10.31261/PS\_P.2021.27.01



Uznanie autorstwa - Na tych samych warunkach - Licencja ta pozwala na kopiowanie, zmienianie, rozprowadzanie, przedstawianie i wykonywanie utworu tak długo, jak tylko na utwory zależne będzie udzielana taka sama licencja.



UNIwersYTET ŚLĄSKI  
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka  
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki  
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego



Nina Augustynowicz

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2420-5484>

University of Silesia in Katowice  
Katowice, Poland

Maria Czempka-Wewióra

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6677-615X>

University of Silesia in Katowice  
Katowice, Poland

## Prescriptum: Women on the Road

This bilingual issue which we are now submitting to the reader takes up the theme of broadly understood travelling, being on the road, wandering, both near (not far from home) and very distant (into unknown realms of time and space). Travelling is associated with discovering new places, getting to know people and cultures, gaining experience, sometimes also pursuing a goal along winding and difficult paths. At other times, travel becomes an end in itself; it can be a way of life in which movement and change are core values. Not all journeys presented in this volume serve the purpose of recreation. Some were caused by oppressive conditions and threats to life and livelihood, which result in emigration, alienation and sacrifices that leave their mark on many generations. An inseparable element of travelling is the risk taken by the explorer. However, as the presented collection of articles confirms, journeys often become a creative impulse that leads to discovering oneself and one's own culture in contact with the people one meets, with their customs and the places one gets to know.

In the articles collected in this volume, the wanderer, the thrill seeker, and finally the tourist is, above all, a woman. While travelling, she charts

new paths, directions, and prospects. The woman traveller often crosses various boundaries – of rooms, houses, regions, countries, continents, worlds, as well as established patterns and stereotypes. Equipped with a suitcase and all the travel essentials, including a pen and notebook, she sets out on a quest. To a large extent, the authors of the texts collected in this volume as well as the objects of their study are women as well: they are writers, researchers, creators, explorers, pioneers full of passion and grit.

When in 1928 Virginia Woolf published *A Room of One's Own*, she made a compelling argument for the place of women in the male-dominated literary world. To forge their own space among the Wordsworths, Byrons, and Shelleys, Woolf wrote, women need the reassuring materiality of a steady income and a room, and the independence that comes with them. What is even more important, the room, the personal space whose significance Woolf emphasised, needs to have a lock on the door. Being in possession of the key symbolises an extent of control over one's life and the ability to create within this protected space.

In putting together this volume, we were clearly inspired by Woolf's strong declaration. Following her legacy of liberation, we focused on female authors and characters who extend the definition of a room of one's own well beyond the domestic space. Using a suitcase of their own, they travel locally and globally, exploring the possibilities of taking this freedom even further. This is not to mean that all accounts of women travellers are stories of success. Having to wrestle with restrictions both as writers and as travellers, they often found themselves constrained in more than one way. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Industrial Revolution and the rapid technological progress that ensued proved to ameliorate this situation, but railway travel alone did not suffice to liberate women from patriarchal oppression. Allowing simultaneously for a greater mobility and a wider exposure to the male gaze, train journeys proved to be challenging. Still, once initiated, the process could not really be stopped; technological and industrial advances sparked on a modest but steady increase in the numbers of women travellers, which accelerated significantly towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Britain, with the colonial

enterprise and imperial expansion building up steam, many women found themselves virtually 'exported' to the colonies to either accompany their husbands posted to the 'peripheries' to maintain Britain's metropolitan power, or to 'catch' a husband once their resources back home trickled out. Indeed, 'husband hunting' became quite a widespread trend in the Raj; what it meant, apart from the most obvious marital promotion, was that the demand for British women abroad was becoming stronger by the day – they were needed as lady companions to the freshly married wives, as nannies and governesses to the foreign-born British children, as nurses, care-takers, and socialites.

Slowly, women were beginning to discover that there might be more to travel than enacting those pre-assigned roles, and some were actually venturing out on their own, in pursuit of their own goals. Apparently, the expat community offered slightly more freedom than the constricted home environment, and a single woman out sojourning could expect less social and cultural odium.

Development of new means of transport, the rise of the automobile and the dawning of motor culture, not to mention the revolution brought on by the launch of aeroplanes and air travel, opened up a lot of new directions, freeing spaces and regions previously unavailable to road or rail travellers. From that moment onwards, there could no longer be any stopping of the more or less prosperous globetrotters who were out conquering the world.

Those adventures took on various forms and shapes including the notorious 'spiritual journeys' to the East in pursuit of mind expansion or, more extremely, the annihilation of the ego. What started off as a genuinely internal journey made by the likes of Ella Maillart or Annemarie Schwarzenbach has long grown mellow and bland, not to say discredited by reductionist attitudes and coarse expectations, only exacerbated with the dawning of the era of mass tourism, package holidays, and low fare airlines. Importantly, though, travel is not only about 'going places'—it is also work (archaeology, cartography, journalism, etc.), missionary and charitable activities, environmental activism, exile (political, economic), migration, seeking refuge, relocations, fleeing from war; it

is opening locked doors and entering spaces that were previously out of bounds. Women have been doing it all. In this volume, journeys are examined and analysed from various perspectives, using diverse methodologies and approaches. The main objective of the collection is to illuminate how women have engaged in travelling, how their modes of involvement have been developing and changing, and what the future of women explorers might be.

Texts collected in the first section – *Women's Travel Narratives from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century until Today* – follow a chronological order (according to the date of birth of the author discussed). The traditional linear perspective will actually allow the heroines and their recorded exploits to speak for themselves more vociferously than when grouped according to motifs and tropes, which would obscure the inalienable component of historic specificity and social context. The section opens with Sarah LeFanu's essay, in which the author looks at the travels and travel-writings of Mary Kingsley and Rose Macaulay, and suggests some connections with the science fictional spacewomen and time-travellers of the second wave of feminism. The stakes involved in a woman's solitary travel are addressed by Gillian Beattie-Smith, who delves into Dorothy Wordsworth's journals in order to examine how her accounts of journeys to Scotland establish her as a woman writer and a proper lady. The theme of women asserting themselves and proving their capabilities in a traditionally male-dominated environment is also addressed by Julia Szoltysek, who discusses the Victorian traveller Gertrude Bell – scholar, historian, mountaineer, photographer, archaeologist, gardener, cartographer, linguist, British spy, confidante to Arabian princes and kings. Zbigniew Białas focuses on Vita Sackville-West's account of her crossing the Polish-Prussian border, and in particular he looks at the narrative function of anecdote tangled in social and political contexts. Rose Simpson takes the ideas of the woman traveller and the writing self to the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the figure of Austrian novelist and émigré Vicki Baum. Simpson examines a variety of sources, including Baum's personal communications, fiction, and journalism, to trace her quest for Heimat. Anna Kisiel expands the collection's perspective to embrace

poetry. By focusing on Eavan Boland's poem "The Journey", Kisiel analyses Boland's take on the path towards femininity in the context of Bracha L. Ettinger's matrixial theory, a supplement to the Freudian-Lacanian approach. Agnieszka Podruczna takes this further afield and offers an examination of the peculiar ties between the postcolonial theory and science fiction, discussing how speculative fiction allows for an in-depth analysis of the contemporary diasporic condition and the issues of memory and cultural identity, in the context of a dialogue with contemporary diaspora studies and postcolonial studies. Sonia Caputa switches lenses once more, guiding the reader's attention towards the immigrant experience presented by Polish-American writer Karolina Waclawiak in her debut novel *How to Get into the Twin Palms* (2012). The section closes with Linda Cracknell's memoiristic essay "Walking in Circles, Making Stories out of Landscapes", which takes up the trope of walking alone in remote landscapes and is a valuable study of new nature writing.

Women's explorations refer also to new media: the world of cinema, television, and video games. It is not only about the big and small screens, but also about the situations which take place outside the frame. The section *The Winding Paths of Women in Film, Television and Video Games* opens with Agnieszka Tambor showing how women creators are blazing new trails and changing established ways of thinking that limit them in terms of artistic work, dress or behaviour, as well as overturning myths and stereotypes that govern the masculinised environment of the film industry. The fact that female characters have taken over the small screen is confirmed by Sonia Front, who describes the struggles of the time-travelling heroine of the TV series *Haven*. The author draws attention to the ecological dimension of these journeys and the tragic consequences human actions have for nature. Tomasz Gnat, in turn, penetrates into the world of video games, focusing on Lara Croft – the archetypal protagonist of the *Tomb Raider* series. In this context, the author examines the dualisms existing between the body and exoticism, the natural environment and the mental aspects of travelling.

The importance of travel narratives and their role in contemporary culture, including digital culture, is raised by the following authors: Dariusz Rott, Katarzyna Frukacz, and Szymon Gębuś in the section *Wanderer or Globetrotter – Forms and Functions of Travel Narratives*. The first of the researchers reveals to the readers the still partly unknown world of Icelandic nature, represented both in literary texts and works that border on fine arts. Katarzyna Frukacz examines Globstory by Kaja Kraska, a woman-produced travel channel, and its paratexts, analysing the vlog owner's image, her interactions with viewers, and references to the genre of reporting. Szymon Gębuś, in turn, offers a teaching proposal postulating the use of selected travel narratives in courses on world and Polish literature.

The authors of the texts included in the *Varia* section continue to raise the issues of travel and the search for truth or one's own identity through encountering the other. Andrzej Kaliszewski probes the image of Soviet communism which emerges from the texts of Polish reporters: Melchior Wańkowicz, Ksawery Pruszyński, Hanna Krall and Ryszard Kapuściński. The writers – Polish classics of the genre – tried to rise to the challenge of reliably representing the Soviet Union in their works, despite the fact that they often had to deal with the burden of stereotypes, Soviet propaganda, and the pressure of censorship. The second text in the section is devoted to Wojciech Karpiński, who was an émigré since 1981 until his death in 2020 and who was connected with the "Kultura" magazine. His search for his own identity in relation to the works of other writers contributed to his extremely rich editorial work, in which Karpiński popularised the works of, among others: Józef Czapski, Czesław Miłosz, and Aleksander Wat.

This year's first issue traditionally closes with Agnieszka Nęcka's "Bookshelf". The author's selection of recommended publications from 2020 includes mostly (with two exceptions) works by women authors, and thus "Bookshelf" fully embraces the volume's theme.

In the spring of 2021, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic continues to re-define human desires and set limits to what is possible, and the whole world is grappling with its direct or indirect consequences. The ways

we travel have changed, and the virus has already proven to put a halt to movements of people and goods globally, immobilizing entire nations and their economies, freezing their cultural and social networks. After the initial responses to the pandemic, which at first tended to elicit a peculiar sort of thrill at simply having to stay put under the false assumption that this confinement can be spent quite pleasantly making up for all the things that we had never had time for before, it appears that new trends in travel and travel literature are beginning to emerge. Seeing that our roaming has become severely limited, usually to our most immediate environs, many of us – in acts of rebellion against being kept immobile – have turned to ‘travelling home’, swapping exotic journeys for homely drive-arounds, and jet-setting adventures for cosy day-trips. In some instances, ‘travel literature’ as a record of these experiences has been replaced by a fresh alternative of ‘place literature’, constituting an unheard-of phenomenon which, with all its ties and knots, calls for literary volumes all of their own. This, however, is an entirely different journey whose itinerary will surely take some time to become well-mapped and domesticated; in the meantime, we cordially invite you for a trip with *A Suitcase of Her Own: Women and Travel*, hoping that, despite the charms of home travel, all the roads will soon reopen.

NINA AUGUSTYNOWICZ – PhD, Institute of Literary Studies, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland.

Augustynowicz is a literary scholar who specialises in critical food studies. She has completed her PhD dissertation on the subject of conceptual metaphors of food in Victorian literature. She has published on the significance of eating in the works of Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and in popular culture. Her current research continues to focus on the exploration of foodscapes, especially in terms of the reproduction of femininity through alimentary practices.

E-mail: [nina.augustynowicz@us.edu.pl](mailto:nina.augustynowicz@us.edu.pl)



MARIA CZEMPKA-WEWIÓRA – PhD, School of Polish Language and Culture, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland.

Her interests focus on cognitive cultural and glottodidactic issues, as well as the possibilities of using speech therapy theory and practice in the process of teaching Polish as a foreign language. She is the author of academic articles on the category of remembrance in language and literature and on teaching Polish as a foreign language. She has lectured at universities in Bulgaria, Germany, Slovakia, Ukraine and Italy. Since 2017, she has been a certified examiner for the State Commission for the Certification of Proficiency in Polish as a Foreign Language.

E-mail: [maria.czempka-wewiora@us.edu.pl](mailto:maria.czempka-wewiora@us.edu.pl)